



# RAIDERS IN LENOIR



## *St. James Episcopal Church and Prison*



### STONEMAN'S RAID

On March 24, 1865, Union Gen. George Stoneman led 6,000 cavalymen from Tennessee into southwestern Virginia and western North Carolina to disrupt the Confederate supply line by destroying sections of the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad, the North Carolina Railroad, and the Piedmont Railroad. He struck at Boone on March 28, headed into Virginia on April 2, and returned to North Carolina a week later. Stoneman's Raid ended at Asheville on April 26, the day that Confederate Gen. Joseph E. Johnston surrendered to Union Gen. William T. Sherman near Durham.

The church that stood here in 1865 became a prison for three days when Union Gen. George Stoneman, with two brigades of raiders under Gen. Alvan C. Gillem, occupied Lenoir over Easter weekend, April 15–17, 1865. The prisoners were 900 old men, boys, and Confederate soldiers captured as they recuperated at their homes from



St. James Episcopal Church, ca. 1900  
Courtesy Caldwell Heritage Museum



Ella Harper (Mrs.  
George W. Harper)  
Courtesy Caldwell  
Heritage Museum

wounds or illness. They filled the grounds and sanctuary of Saint James Episcopal Church, which served as a hospital as well as a prison.

Some looting occurred in Lenoir, but most residents merely suffered a scare. Local resident Joseph C. Norwood wrote, "We are just through with a scene of alarm and very great danger," but added that the cavalymen "were equipped in the very best manner, and under the severest discipline and were not allowed to plunder to any great extent or commit any acts of violence." Ella Harper, of Lenoir, wrote in her diary on April 15, "At sunset the Yanks rushed in on us. We obtained a guard about our house after they came in, and fared better than some others. Did not undress or sleep all night." The next day, Easter Sunday, was "unlike the Holy Sabbath," she wrote, with "excitement, confusion and hurry all day. Our



Gen. George Stoneman  
Library of Congress



Gen. Alvan C. Gillem  
Library of Congress

poor prisoners seemed almost starved."

On the morning of April 17, part of Stoneman's force rode west toward Morganton while Stoneman, the prisoners, and a guard headed northward toward Blowing Rock. Lenoir resident Louisa Norwood wrote her uncle, Walter Lenoir, that Union cavalymen called Lenoir "the damnedest little rebel town they ever saw."

